26 December 2013 - The UK will become one of a small number of countries to forecast the weather in space.

A £4.6M investment in this innovative system by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) will help protect the technologies our day-to-day lives rely on.

Severe solar flares, space storms and solar wind can disrupt satellites, GPS, power grids and radio communications.

Space weather forecasts, running all day, every day from spring 2014, will allow government and businesses to take swift action to ensure services are maintained.

Universities and Science Minister, David Willetts, said: "The sun is in constant flux, and the possibly damaging impact of this solar activity is growing as people become more reliant on satellite technology.

"Space is one of the Eight Great Technologies of the future and I'm pleased that this worthwhile project has received the funding it's due. These forecasts will ensure that businesses can plan ahead, keeping us at the forefront of the global race."

The £4.6M investment, spread over the next three years, will allow the Met Office to build on its partnership with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service, sharing knowledge and expertise in space weather forecasting.

Andrew Richards, a Risk and Resilience Analyst for National Grid, said: "A round the clock UK forecasting service for space weather is essential as part of National Grid's procedures for running the electricity transmission network securely and safely. It is great news for National Grid that the Met Office has secured funding for its space weather forecasting operations"

Mark Gibbs, Head of Space Weather at the Met Office, said: "Space weather is a relatively immature science but understanding is growing rapidly. The Met Office is working with NOAA Space Weather Prediction Centre in the US in a collaboration which aims to enable both organisations to accelerate the development of improved space weather models and prediction systems to make more effective use of space weather data.

"This investment will enable the Met Office to complete the space weather forecasting capability that it has been developing over the past two years and begin delivering forecasts, warnings and alerts to key sectors to minimise the impact to the technology based services we all rely on."

Louis Uccellini, Ph.D., director, NOAA's National Weather Service, said: "Accurately predicting and preparing for the impacts from space weather requires a commitment similar to terrestrial weather forecasting and preparedness.

"Our countries' collaborative efforts will help to promote preparedness and resilience to protect critical infrastructure against the growing and evolving global impacts from space weather."

The Met Office is developing the forecasts in collaboration with a range of UK partners such as the British Geological Survey, Bath University and RAL Space as well as international partners such as the US NOAA Space Weather Prediction Centre.

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